Earlier this year we held a GP Practice Learning Time focusing on transgender awareness. During that session you heard from Dr Simon Tickle from the Gender Identity Clinic (GIC) as well as those with lived experience of the issues that can affect the transgender community.

The Royal College of GPs position statement June 2019 - The role of the GP in caring for gender-questioning and transgender patients (the whole document can be found at the following link https://www.rcgp.org.uk/policy/rcgp-policy-areas/transgender-care.aspx

GPs are most often the first point of contact with the health care system for individuals questioning their gender. In some cases, GPs can be the first people they confide in about their gender identity or uncertainties about their gender identity. General practice plays a vital role in ensuring these patients receive the care they need. GPs are expected to approach the holistic care of gender-questioning and transgender patients as they do with every patient – openly, respectfully, sensitively and without bias.

Did you know: "Transgender, abbreviated to trans, is a broad category. It simply means that a person’s sense of their gender doesn’t match their physical body and gender assigned at birth. They might feel that they are a completely different gender to the one they were assigned. They want to live all of the time as the other gender, and for the rest of their life (i.e. to "Transition"). Other people, however, may feel that they don’t really belong to either recognised gender ("non-binary" or "genderqueer" being two of the terms they might apply to themselves), or that they identify more with one gender at certain times and another gender at different times ("gender-fluid")" .........

Hormone therapy

Although most GPs have no more than a couple of patients who have gender issues, awareness is on the increase and more patients are coming forward for treatment. So much so that there is now an extremely long wait for appointments at each of the clinics of around three years. It is not surprising, therefore, that patients are requesting hormone therapy from their GPs and even obtaining supplies from the internet in the meantime.

The clinic is very happy to be contacted by GPs for advice on managing their patients, Dr Tickle can be reached via: 07841 833055. It may be helpful to understand that GICs are commissioned by NHS England and are unable to prescribe for patients and do not have the facilities for blood testing. In addition, many patients travel long distances to attend the clinics which makes it impractical for them to get blood tests and prescriptions from the clinic itself therefore they rely heavily on the patients’ GPs for support.

Support for patients

Prescribing and blood tests aside, what else can GPs do to support patients? Some of it is very simple such as those things that a GP might consider for any patient. During the PLT, managing obesity was highlighted as important. Patients will be declined for gender reassignment surgery if their BMI is >30. Surgery can be extensive and complex with a significant VTE risk so helping patients manage their weight whilst they are on their three year wait may be a useful intervention, including referring them on the bariatric pathway if appropriate.
Gamete storage was another hot topic for this group. This is a procedure that requires CCG prior approval and may cause a hold up on the surgery waiting list. If this is appropriate for your patient you will need to check the CCG criteria for qualifying for this procedure.

Younger patients <18 years must be seen at the Tavistock clinic. Bearing in mind the long waits for adult clinics it is worth thinking about the age that the patient will be at the point they get to the top of the waiting list and consider your referral strategy pragmatically!

**How should my practice advise Primary Care Support England (PCSE) of a patient gender reassignment?**

When a patient changes gender, they are given a new NHS number and must be registered as a new patient at your practice. All previous medical information relating to the patient needs to be transferred into a newly created medical record. When the patient informs the practice that they wish to change gender, the practice must inform the patient that this will involve a new NHS number being issued for them, which is not reversible. To revert back to their original gender, they would receive a third NHS number.

The practice should confirm this has been discussed with the patient when notifying PCSE. GP practice creates new patient record using new details, and transfers all previous medical information from the original medical record. Any information relating to the patient’s previous identity should not be included in the new record:

- If the gender is being re-assigned from male to female, the screening team will contact the practice for no cervix confirmation.
- If the gender is being re-assigned from female to male, screening will become the responsibility of the practice.

**Further information:** the slides shared during the PLT can be found on the CCG website: [https://www.miltonkeynesccg.nhs.uk/plt/](https://www.miltonkeynesccg.nhs.uk/plt/)

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**Useful links to information and support for GPs and patients:**

- Information from the NHS about the medical condition of Gender Dysphoria: [http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Gender-dysphoria/Pages/Treatment.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Gender-dysphoria/Pages/Treatment.aspx)
- Link to GIRES (which has good information on what the NHS can and would normally provide): [http://www.gires.org.uk/](http://www.gires.org.uk/)
- Link to Daventry GIC’s web page (the first page provides a good overview of what they do) [https://www.nhft.nhs.uk/gic](https://www.nhft.nhs.uk/gic)

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Healthwatch and Q:Alliance worked in partnership and with the involvement of MK CCG to produce *LGBTQ+ Health Inequalities and Access to Health* - April 2019 where the experiences of health care by those with lived experience was shared. The attached document has a range of useful links.

Q:alliance is a registered charity that provides support, information and representation for the LGBTQ+ people who live, work and play in Milton Keynes see [http://qailliance.org.uk/](http://qailliance.org.uk/) and [http://qalliance.org.uk/trans-support](http://qalliance.org.uk/trans-support)